

# W5YI

## America's Oldest Ham Radio Newsletter REPORT

Up to the minute news from the world of amateur radio, personal computing and emerging electronics. While no guarantee is made, information is from sources we believe to be reliable.

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Fred Maia, W5YI, Editor, P.O. Box 565101, Dallas, TX 75356-5101  
Electronic mail: fmaia@internetMCI.com Website: <http://www.w5yi.org>  
Tel. 817-461-6443 FAX: 817-548-9594

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### FCC Hints of Imminent Ham Radio Restructuring at Dayton Forum

Nearly 30,000 amateurs made their annual pilgrimage May 15 to 17 to the Dayton HamVention -- the nation's largest hamfest. What used to take place on the last weekend in April now is the third weekend in May. For the second year in a row, the weather was beautiful.

Most long time attendees and exhibitors agreed that attendance was down about 10 to 15% over last year - probably reflecting the influence and popularity of the Internet and personal computers on our high tech hobby. The *Dayton Amateur Radio Association* under the able leadership of Dick Miller, N8CBU and Jim Graver, KB8PSO did their usual superlative job in putting on the annual event.

The sold-out Saturday evening HamVention banquet was held at the Nutter Center on the campus of Wright State University in nearby Fairborn, Ohio. Bob Runinga, WB4APR was presented with the *Technical Excellence Award* for his development work in APRS packet locating systems. Attorney Jay Bellows, K0QB received the *Special Achievement Award* for his long time participation in ARRL's Volunteer Consul program and his work on PRB-1 -- the federal decision that requires municipalities to reasonably accommodate amateur communications. *1998 Ham of the Year* Andy Feldman WB2XFN was cited for his many contributions to emergency and public service communications including support of the TWA Flight 800 disaster in July 1996.

The banquet featured ham entertainer, Ronnie

Milsap WB4KCG who brought along his entire concert entourage to Dayton from its Nashville headquarters. Milsap is a previous Country Music Association *Entertainer of the Year*, a three time winner of the *Male Vocalist of the Year* ('74, '76 and '77) and CMA's *Album of the Year* ('76, '78, and '86.) Blind since birth, Milsap is also the recipient of the only gold Braille album ever awarded.

There were dozens of excellent educational programs given covering every amateur radio subject imaginable -- including QRP, AMSAT (Satellites), TAPR (Digital), MARS, a Teacher's Workshop, GPS, kit building, antenna technology, DX, spectrum management, frequency coordination, public service communications, slow-scan TV, contesting, direction finding ...and much, much more!

Since Johnny Johnston, W3BE retired from the Commission earlier this year, the FCC Forum was presented by William T. Cross, W3TN. Bill works in the Policy and Rules Branch of the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau's Public Safety and Private Wireless Division in Washington, DC. Among other duties, this branch is responsible for amateur service rule making activities and the day-to-day administration of the amateur service.

Cross has been with the FCC since 1976. For the last decade, however, he has worked in the personal and amateur services area. He has been a ham for nearly 30 years and got his W3TN call sign through the new vanity call sign system.

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## The FCC Forum

Bill started off by saying that he was "...here to summarize for you the Commission's major rule making and licensing activities that have or will affect the amateur service and to listen to your remarks. I'm not with the Compliance and Information Bureau. They are the guys at the FCC with the radios, sweatshirts with a drop-flap that says FCC, and really neat antennas, vans, and cars. Neither am I with the Office of Engineering and Technology -- which handles spectrum allocations and the RF safety matter -- nor am I with the International Bureau -- which is involved with World Radio Conferences, satellites and topics like that. Frequently some of you have inquiries about matters that are handled by those bureaus.

"I see that there are several people knowledgeable about the rules in the audience. They will keep me honest so that I'll tell you what the rules are -- not what I wish they were, or what I heard they were in the flea market yesterday. Hopefully, you'll carry this information back to your clubs, newsletter writers, nets and other groups.

"Before we get into the ham stuff, I want to take a couple of minutes and tell you about some of the global events that have occurred at the Commission in the past year. They have, are, and will continue to impact you. My guess is in bigger ways than ever before.

"The past year has been a year of tremendous changes at the Commission. As some of you know, the Commission is composed of five commissioners appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. First off, for the first time since it was created in 1934, the FCC received four new commissioners, all at once. This happened last November. None of the new commissioners or their assistants are hams.

"Second, a new commission means new objectives and concerns. Chairman Kennard laid these out in a speech right after he was confirmed. The standards for regulation that he emphasized were *community, competition, and common sense*.

"Last February, the Chairman offered a comprehensive rundown of his goals for the FCC this year, with his top six priorities evenly split between telephone and mass media. The Chairman targeted expanding choice and speeding price competition in phone and cable industries as top priorities for this year.

"Third, the Commission was confronted by a lot of very big issues on a lot of different fronts even as the commissioners were setting up their offices and hiring their staffs. How the Commission has implemented the *Telecommunications Act of 1996* has been very controversial and has received a lot of attention in the courts and Congress. Mass Media Bureau issues include violence blocking chips or *V-chips*, a TV program rating system, high definition and digital TV standards, reallocation of spectrum to accommodate HDTV, must carry rules, air

time and costs for political candidates, and the public interest obligations of broadcasters. Increasing rates for cable service also are a very visible and controversial issues.

"Common Carrier issues include Internet usage and the impact on the local telecom networks, slamming of customers by long distance companies (we get 40,000 plus complaints a year), universal service funding, funding for libraries and schools, and local service competition between cable, long distance and local or regional telephone companies.

"The international Bureau is involved with international telecommunications competition and rates, satellite coordination and spectrum, and international conference preparation like that started for WRC 99, among other things.

"Wireless issues include interpretation and implementation of the *Balanced Budget Act of 1997*, new parameters for determining when spectrum should be auctioned by competitive bidding, additional spectrum for public safety, the re-farming of land mobile spectrum and implementation of electronic filing and the universal licensing system.

"You may also be aware that the Commission has been planning a move to a new headquarters building, too. The move is supposed to start this fall. We're getting new everything-computer systems, ISM suites, communications systems, etc. All of our files have to be converted.

"Then there is the biennial review of our rules required by the 1996 statute (more later) and all the regular matters we have to attend to. I have mentioned this so you have an idea about what the landscape is like in which ham radio is competing for attention at the FCC and FCC service. The trend in regulation is simplifying and streamlining where appropriate, eliminating unnecessary regulations, and getting out of the business of managing. I hope you sense that asking for more regulations that have the effect of excluding individuals, using regulations to solve disputes between licensees or to involve us in the management of your service is not the direction the Commission appears to be headed in.

"And lastly, I'm up here on my own this year because as many of you know, John Johnston retired at the end of January. John and his wife Betty are here with us today. John spent 26 years working for you and I can tell you that, with a few exceptions, he really enjoyed it. Please give him a round of applause. And stop by to say hi after we are through. [applause]

"We are really missing him. When he started asking me about HF transceivers last fall, I had a feeling this was either retirement coming or a mid-life crisis. I was hoping for the latter. When he told me one morning that he dug out a microphone and the antennas still rotated, I should have run.

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## The Internet

"How many of you have checked out the FCC's ham radio Internet Web Site? For those who haven't, you go to: <<http://www.fcc.gov/wtb/amateur>>

"At the top of the amateur service home page are the most recent rule making items I think you might be interested in. Some of them, like the Universal Licensing System proceeding, are not strictly amateur radio items but the amateur service is included in them. Each listing is linked to the item so that all you have to do is click your mouse to view the item. If you download it, you can see for yourself what the item says.

"The selection of items is based on feedback and my judgment. If you think something else should be there, let me know. My e-mail address is [bcross@fcc.gov](mailto:bcross@fcc.gov). My standard is this: If the link will save me answering a question, it goes on.

"There are two Commission activities that I want to talk about. The first is the *Universal Licensing Service* proposal; the second is the anticipated amateur service *Biennial Review* proceeding. Before that, I want to update you on the vanity call sign system and the special event call sign system. Call signs always seem to be of interest to hams. And there are two rulemaking proposals that we have received that may be of interest to you.

## Vanity Call Sign System

"As of mid-May, we have issued about 21,000 vanity call signs out of the more than 28,000 applications we have received. Applications received through April 22 have been processed when I left Washington. We are still getting 500 to 1000 applications a month.

"Most people seem very pleased with the system but it has had its difficult moments and it has had some pretty humorous episodes too. The call sign 'aloha,' AL0HA, is assigned to the Coconut Island DX Association, in where else but, Anchorage Alaska. I wonder how many coconuts are on the trees outside that station. And Anchorage isn't on an island last time I checked. When it comes to arranging letters and numbers and gaming the system, your creativity has been astonishing.

"We expected nothing less. This is the incentive in a vanity system. Thank goodness there is no rule that requires truth in call signs!

"You told us that you wanted the vanity system to be fair and equitable and what you meant by 'fair and equitable.' We tried very hard to give you the system you wanted. Of course everyone interested in getting a vanity call sign saw that fair and equitable translated into who got first shot at assignable call signs.

"The system seems to be running pretty well and most people are able to read the rules for it. They are on our home page. A lot about it has been published in your

magazines and newsletters, too. Gate 4 opened last December. Now that all of the gates are open, any licensee can apply for a vanity call sign. About 80% of the applications for vanity call signs are being filed electronically.

"Several of you are helping out by keeping close watch on the vanity call signs that are being assigned. You are still bringing to our attention instances where the requester is not eligible for what he was assigned. We are still working on some of the allegations surrounding call signs that were assigned to stations at the beginning of Gate 2.

"To get other hams riled up, all you have to do is pick an extremely well known deceased ham's call sign or a very desirable call sign and go for it. One guy did this just before Gate 2 opened. It was a 1-by-2 that ended with 'DX'. I got a phone call and it took us five minutes using an Internet database to find the son of the former holder. The applicant was no relative. If you are going to try to jump ahead of the crowd, you must have documentation sufficient to withstand a challenge by other hams.

"Other guys were amazed that we would challenge whether they were the relative of a deceased ham whose call sign just happened to be their initials. It's not hard to make a *prima facie* case when old Callbooks are in my office. And we have access to complete sets outside the FCC. As well as Commission records that go back decades.

"What I'm getting now is questions about call signs that are not assignable for two years. This limitation was put in because QSLs take so long to work through the bureaus and to prevent trafficking in call signs. Many 'good' call signs have been given up for new ones and other licensees want those surrendered calls. The general request is that the callers want the exception for close relative of former holder, now deceased, to be expanded. They want the exception to be: close relative of former good call sign holder, still living. A lawyer wants the executor of an estate added to the list of relatives who could agree to allow a club to get your call sign as an in memoriam call sign. After all, he got everything else.

"On March 25, 1998 the Commission released a *Notice of Proposed Rule Making* in MD Docket No. 98-36. This docket originated in the Managing Director's office. It proposes to reduce the fee for vanity call sign applications from \$50.00 to \$12.90. The final fee may be different. The comment period closed May 4. If adopted, the new fee would become applicable when the new fee schedule becomes effective. The fee you pay is based on the date your application is filed with the Commission. The fee is \$50.00 for applications received before the effective date for collection of FY 1999 fees. No refunds will be given.

## Special Event Call Signs

"Your many requests for one-by-one call signs indicated that you want some type of special event call sign

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system. This system is up and running. You now have a database of 750 special event call signs that you self-administer. We have certified volunteer entities to serve as amateur station special event call sign data base coordinators. They coordinate, maintain and disseminate a common on-line data base for the special event call signs. A *Public Notice* is on our home page so you know who these coordinators are.

## Petitions for Rule Making

"As I mentioned earlier, in the last month we have received two rule making petitions that may be of interest to you. The first is from the ARRL. It is RM-9259. We received it April 3, 1998. It is a *Request for Declaratory Ruling* asking that we clarify that 'good amateur practice' entails compliance with voluntary band plans. It also asks that we find that any station that selects a transmitting frequency not in harmony with the voluntary band plans is not operating in accord with Section §97.101 of the rules. It applies to all of the amateur bands.

"We have already received many comments on this petition. None of them support it. The comment period is open until May 21. Reply comments are due June 5. If you send in a comment, please send a copy to the ARRL.

"The second petition is from a Land Mobile [business band] trade association, the Land Mobile Communications Council. This petition has been designated RM-9267. It seeks an allocation of 420-430 MHZ and 440-450 MHZ to Private Mobile Radio Services. These segments are in your 70 cm band. The amateur service would remain a secondary service. Comments on this RM are due June 1, 1998; reply comments are due June 16, 1998.

"Comments for both of these rule making petitions should be sent to the Secretary, FCC, Washington DC 20554. You must put the RM number on the comment for it to find its way to the record.

## Now for the big two items.

On March 18, the Commission released a *Notice of Proposed Rule Making* in WT Docket No. 98-20. This NPRM is referred to as the *Universal Licensing System* or ULS docket. It proposes to modernize the Commission's licensing processes. Comments are due May 22; reply comments are due June 8. The proposal, if adopted, would affect you in a number of ways.

"Lets stop here for a minute and talk about ham radio and modern systems. Let me ask a question: What makes you a ham?

"Is it the ball cap with a certain alpha-numeric combination on it? No, anybody can buy one. Is it the name tag on your jacket? No. The DXCC pins? No. Is it a 23 or 40 channel radio in the basement? Answer yes and you will be carried out of this room! With no witnesses.

"Alan Dorhoffer [K2EEK, CQ Magazine editor] hit it

on the head in the April editorial -- 'We spend an inordinate amount of time trying to define who's real and who's not, and not trying to figure out why we're doing this thing in the first place.'

"Is it because your transmitter has a glass window and a label on it that says GATES? Maybe on 160M. When the horses are racing and the center insulators are arcing.

"If we worked each other on 20M and we were logging with computers that accessed Buckmaster or SAMs or one of the other databases, why would you accept that W3TN is OK but WA3LJP or AA3DI is not? In fact, if I used any of my old call signs, you would probably challenge me. Unless the database showed my old call, and then you would probably correct me.

"Ah Ha! The answer-you are a ham because you are on the Commission's database of amateur service licensees. Not because you own a radio, or have a ball cap, or a name tag. And you don't ever have to use a radio or own one. It is because you are on the database.

"Now we all know that today our lives are influenced by databases. The magnetic strip on your ID gets you in the door because a database recognizes the information on it. That database keeps you out of other areas. Same for your ATM card, credit card, checks, and so forth. And when databases are incorrect, we have a problem. If you are stopped for speeding and your driver's license number or license plate number was incorrectly entered in the police database, you have two problems. Speeding just became the minor one.

"We still get inquiries every day from some hams who just can't believe that they no longer must wait until a license document is in hand before getting on the air with their new call signs. The new hams don't seem to have this problem. The minute they appear on the database, the vanity call sign application goes off. The decision to grant your operating authority occurs when your licensing information is placed on the amateur service licensee database -- not when a piece of paper arrives in your mailbox.

"Conversely, when your licensing information is removed from the database, you have no operating authority, just like when that PIN number isn't in the ATM database, you have no money. In our modern society, it isn't a piece of paper that make you a ham, provides you money to spend, invest, or do many of your day-to-day activities - it's a database entry.

"And the trend is to use even more databases because, for the most part, they are reliable, relatively inexpensive, especially when compared to alternatives that yield less functionality and require armies of people to maintain, and they provide a lot of other capabilities once the data is in. The FCC is aware of this, too. This is part of working smarter and faster. [Continued on Page 8]

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## RSGB CONFIRMS ITS NEW POSITION ON MORSE UK Class B (No-Code VHF/UHF) Licensees to Get HF

In our last issue, we mentioned that the *Radio Society of Great Britain* would no longer be supporting Morse code proficiency as a licensing requirement for HF operation. That story was based on a supposedly confidential letter that was sent from the RSGB headquarters to its volunteers. The 28,000 member RSGB is the national amateur radio society in the United Kingdom.

The letter was subsequently leaked to the amateur radio media. We tried to obtain confirmation of the new position of the RSGB by sending an e-mail to their General Manager (Peter A. Kirby). But our letter was not answered. We published the story anyway after we were convinced that it was accurate.

Both the RSGB president, Ian J. Kyle G18AYZ and Peter Kirby G0TWW were at the Dayton Hamvention, so we had an opportunity to talk with them. Kyle confirmed that our information was correct and he said that the RSGB membership would be notified on May 26<sup>th</sup> via a "leader" article in the June issue of *RadCom*, the RSGB monthly journal. Ian also gave me an advance copy of that release which follows:

In this year of 1998 Amateur Radio is one hundred years old. Yet although the technology used has changed dramatically during that period, with a multitude of new techniques, in some other respects there has been little change. December's *RadCom* leader contained the phrase "...we live in interesting and rapidly changing times" and that statement and those changes have been reflected in Council deliberations during recent months.

At its meeting in April, Council agreed that it would open discussions with the Radiocommunications Agency to begin a process of liberalising access to the HF amateur bands. Council sees the first step in this as an additional licence category giving full access to the HF bands to existing Class "B" [No-Code VHF/UHF] licensees subject to a 5 wpm Morse capability. The Society hopes that the RA will support this approach. If agreed, however, this licence would only be available for use within the United Kingdom, and would not grant privileges on HF bands in other countries under the CEPT arrangements. [The full Class "A" license requires 12 wpm Morse proficiency.]

The maintenance of Morse as a mandatory requirement for access to the HF bands is IARU policy. Council, however, now believes that this position can not be sustained in the longer term and will be opening discussions with IARU Societies and other interested bodies to reconsider the position to be adopted at the WRC in 2001, when the matter of Morse as a necessary qualifier for access to HF bands is likely to be considered.

In taking its position on Morse, Council is mindful of the strength of feeling around this issue. Morse has many advantages, including spectrum utilisation, relative simpli-

city of equipment and cost. The Society wishes to see Morse (and Morse segments of the HF bands) preserved as core elements of amateur radio globally. However, Morse is but one mode among many in current use, and it should take its place alongside the others as an equal.

Council is also seeking ways of making the qualifications for the Amateur Licence - be this the RAE or a new qualification - more accessible and less expensive. Also under discussion are proposals that might lead towards an acceptable system of progressive licensing.

Our hobby is in need of stimulation. The numbers of radio amateurs are falling in many parts of the world and this trend is an unhealthy one for the future of amateur radio. We must be seen as progressive and forward looking. We believe that this position will be welcomed by the majority of Radio Amateurs in the United Kingdom who share the view that the Society should take a forward looking and progressive stance on the future of our hobby.

This announcement is particularly important since it represents a complete 'about face' on the part of the RSGB leadership and goes against the results of an earlier RSGB membership survey on Morse code. Interestingly, their website still does not mention their change of position.

Both the RSGB president and General Manager Kirby stopped off at ARRL headquarters on their way to Dayton and advised the League. The ARRL then published the news on their website. It says (in part)

"The Radio Society of Great Britain is taking up the banner to seek reconsideration of the IARU policy supporting mandatory Morse code testing for access to Amateur Radio HF bands. Kyle said, "Mandatory testing of Morse is going to go whether we like it or not."

Kyle and Kirby say there no longer is any good reason to insist that applicants pass a Morse code test to operate on HF. "It's stopping growth in the hobby," Kirby said, adding that he disagrees with those who think it will be the death of the hobby or would lead to lower operating standards. Kirby, a former professional CW operator, said that making someone pass a 12 wpm test "doesn't make one a good operator." The RSGB is looking at a possible revamping of the entire UK licensing and testing structure.

Both Kyle and Kirby have been making the rounds of Amateur Radio clubs in the UK and floating the idea of eventually getting rid of the Morse code requirement altogether. They say most of the hams they speak with support the elimination of compulsory Morse testing. As Kyle put it, most hams in the UK are "thinking with their brains, not with their hearts."

Kirby says the RSGB Council has determined that it cannot support compulsory Morse testing in the long term but also recognizes that it can't change things overnight. "This will ease things a bit," he said of the RSGB's "intermediate" proposal to the RA.

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■ **Connecting the world via small satellites** -- The FCC has taken an important step toward implementing the international arrangements governing Global Mobile Personal Communications by Satellite (GMPCS) systems adopted in Geneva this past March.

GMPCS systems are based on Low Earth Orbit (LEO) technology which was pioneered in the Amateur Service. Non-geostationary LEO satellites are small - 3 foot or less in diameter - and located in orbits closer to the Earth's surface. The advantage is that they are able to receive signals from pocket-sized mobile phones or small terminals with no appreciable delay. In order to achieve global coverage, the new LEO systems comprise several satellites in a constellation around the Earth. These satellites pick up voice and data signals and transfer them to their destination site via interconnection with other satellites in the constellation or by interconnection to a series of "gateway" Earth stations on the ground and then to the terrestrial network.

An enormous benefit of GMPCS systems is that they can provide telecommunications access in remote areas which have no fixed line telephones. Two-thirds of the world's people have never made a voice telephone call - much less accessed the Internet. There will be nearly two dozen GMPCS systems operating within three years. Most will offer voice, fax, paging and data; but a couple will carry broadband services.

The two main players are Motorola's \$3.4 billion "Iridium" which already has all 66 satellites that make up their constellation in orbit. "Teledesic," is a \$9 billion broadband (288 satellite) LEO system which promises ultra-fast worldwide Internet access via satellite. The primary investor in "Teledesic" is Bill Gates (Microsoft) who has entered into a joint-venture with cellular-telephone pioneer, Craig McCaw.

The Commission has now adopted an interim procedure for the type approval of GMPCS terminals which will facilitate their transport across national borders. In addition, the Commission adopted a set of proposed modifications to the FCC's equipment approval process and a proposal to implement the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) that was completed between the United States and the European Community (EC) last year. (By NPRM, FCC Gen. Docket 98-68, May 14)

■ **The importance of the FCC to the nation's economy can be demonstrated in the amount of money Congress has allocated to run the agency over the past thirty years.** In 1970, Congress appropriated nearly \$25 million to finance the FCC's budget. It passed \$50 million in 1976, \$75 million in 1980, \$100 million in 1990, \$125 million in 1992, \$150 million in 1994, \$175 million in 1995. And the FCC's budget is expected to exceed \$200 million in fiscal year 1999! Today, most FCC funding is paid back to the U.S. treasury in the way of regulatory fees assessed on communications providers and users.

■ **Lucent Technologies (Bell Labs) has developed a way for current AM/FM analog radio station to broadcast near CD-quality digital signals.** There are more than 12,000 AM/FM radio stations and 500 million radio receivers in the U.S. -- more than 5 per household! Digital audio AM/FM should be available to consumers within two years.

■ **There seems to be confusion as to just what the Land Mobile Communications Council petition is asking for at 70- cm.** LMCC wants to share 420-430 MHz and 440-450 MHz with the Amateur Service. The band is currently allocated to Government Radiolocation (military radar) with amateur access being on a secondary basis. LMCC wants the two band segments reallocated to the Private Mobile Radio Service with Amateur Radio continuing on a secondary basis. They did not say how Amateur and Business Radio could coexist on the same spectrum. And in our opinion; it is not possible since commercial business communications can not be transacted on Amateur spectrum. A copy of the LMCC petition is on the ARRLWeb page at <http://www.arrl.org/news/bandthreat>. Preliminary comments on RM-9267 are due by June 1; replies by June 15.

■ **A bill giving state and local governments the power to enforce federal regulations covering illegal CB transmitters** has passed the U.S. Senate. Senate Bill 608, introduced by Wisconsin Sen Russell Feingold, was incorporated as an amendment into S.1618, the *Consumer Anti-Slamming Act*, approved May 12 on a 99-to-1 vote. The measure, as redrafted from the original bill with assistance from the ARRL, totally exempts Amateur Radio from its provisions. The amendment clarifies that the possession of an

FCC license to operate an amateur station is complete protection against any local law enforcement action authorized by this amendment.

Feingold introduced his original version of the bill nearly two years ago after receiving complaints from constituents about interference from illegal CB transmitters. In 1996, the City of Beloit, Wisconsin, passed an ordinance giving the city the power to enforce FCC regulations concerning CB interference. (ARRL)

■ **70-cm UHF-CB in Israel** -- Alinco 430 MHz 1/3 watt handy-talkies (\$330) are being imported and sold to the general Israeli public for "...jeep excursions, bicycling, hiking, skiing in Israel and Europe..." Full page ads in local Tel-Aviv newspapers inform readers that unlike cellular phones, there are no air charges or service fees to the two mile range transceivers. The LCD display of a radio in the ad shows the frequency 433.150 MHz. Israeli amateurs want to know how did their Ministry of Communications authorize these radios to be sold as not requiring a license, and on what frequencies are they operational?

**In the United States, Motorola business band radios are being sold to home improvement contractors** by Home Depot. The fine print in the counter display does say a license is needed but no further information (or an application form) is provided. The salesperson had no idea how to go about licensing.

■ **The Japan Amateur Radio League reports that the summer Amateur Radio Festival better known as "Ham Fair '98" will be held for 3 days from Friday August 21st. through Sunday the 23<sup>rd</sup>, at the "Tokyo Big Sight" Convention Center located in the center of Tokyo.** The fair's objective is to introduce amateur radio activities to the general public as well as promoting the exchange of information and friendship among radio amateurs. This year's theme is "It's easy to enjoy HF bands." Special Commemorative Station 8J1HAM will operate from Ham Fair. Featured will be two new exhibitions entitled: "Outdoor" and "Ham & PC Communications." A wide variety of new and updated radio equipment will be displayed by JAIA, the Japan Amateur Radio Industries Association. Last year's attendance exceeded 51,500!

■ **A newspaper article entitled "Free Broadcasting from FCC-imposed Constraints" appearing in the May 17<sup>th</sup> St.**

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**Petersburg Times says that amateur radio operators contributed to the Titanic disaster in 1912! A Quote:**

"The sinking of the Titanic did more than create the opportunity for a major motion picture phenomenon 85 years later; it prompted the government to regulate the airwaves for the first time. The investigation following the Titanic disaster discerned that the ship's distress call was heard by the Marconi Co. wireless telegraph station in Newfoundland, but because the airwaves were jammed with amateur radio operators asking questions and spreading rumors, rescue efforts were hampered.

"The Radio Act of 1912 divvied up the ether, making room for the exclusive use of certain portions for the military, and requiring a license for broadcast. Later, on the theory that the airwaves were a scarce and unique commodity, the government enacted rules clarifying that it owned them, and started regulating the content of radio and then television to ensure the use of the spectrum furthered the 'public interest.'"

**The ARRL has filed a Petition for Rule Making seeking additional special event call sign formats.** At present, only 1x1 format (one prefix letter-one numeral-and one suffix letter) are allocated to the Special Event Call Sign System. This program is administered by call sign administrators. The League wants the FCC to include 1x1 call signs with the suffix letter "X" ...as well as 1xx1 (two numerals), Nxx2, and 1xx3 formats. (Kxx2 and Wxx2 would not be used as special event call signs since these blocks are already allocated to broadcast television translators.) The Part §2.302 (Station Identification) rules would have to be amended by the Commission since the other requested special event call sign formats are currently not authorized to be used by the Amateur Service.

The petition also asks the Commission to include call signs denoting U.S. territories and possessions having no mailing address in the special event program. Use of those call signs would be limited to locations corresponding to and denoted by the call sign. The League says there has been significant demand for special event call signs outside of the 1x1 format and for DXpeditions to locations under U.S. jurisdiction which do not have U.S. Postal Service mailing addresses. At press time, the FCC had not yet assigned a RM (rule making) file number to the petition.

■ **Interesting quote from Chris Turner, ZS6GM, President, SARL (South African Radio League, Johannesburg)** made during an address on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1998: "It is no coincidence, however, that the most technologically developed countries in the world boast the highest proportion of radio amateurs per head of population. In Japan, 1 in 55 is a radio amateur, USA 1 in 400, Germany 1 in 550, UK 1 in 700, Australia 1 in 840 compared with just 1 in 8000 in South Africa."

■ **The FCC says that it might not be enough funding to establish Internet service** in the more than 45,000 schools and libraries that have requested connection subsidies. The reason is that the funding came from access charges levied on long-distance calls which are due to decline sharply after July 1<sup>st</sup>. FCC Chairman Kennard wants schools in poorer communities to get funding first if there is an Internet funding program shortfall.

■ **The UK's Radiocommunications Agency (Great Britain's FCC) has issued a new Information Sheet entitled "Abuse of Amateur Radio."** In it, the RA tells radio amateurs what to do about "...a small minority of amateurs who choose to operate irresponsibly. Most abuse ..is designed either to deny access to the spectrum or to offend and annoy by causing deliberate interference." Here are the five rules that the RA sets forth:

1. Do not respond to abuse. Abusers want an audience, so ignore them.
2. Do not approach or confront them.
3. If abuse occurs frequently, make a note of it. Write down essential details such as the date, time, frequency, location, mobile or fixed, what form the abuse took and other factors you feel useful.
4. Maintain a log in order to build up a pattern of the abuser's operations.
5. Make sure the information is precise and accurate.

The information should be brought to the attention of the Amateur Radio Observation Service (AROS). In the U.S. they are called "Official Observers." If the problem can't be resolved at that level, then AROS will send fully documented cases to the Radiocommunications Agency for possible action.

The above information should prove useful to you since FCC has a new Information and Compliance Bureau Chief. Richard D. Lee has promised to take stern

enforcement action on intentional interference caused by non-compliant and unlicensed operators.

■ **Tec Sat-1B set for June Launch** - Assi Friedman, 4X1KX/KK7KX, reports from Arizona State University that the TechSat team has confirmed a tentative launch date for the TechSat-1B amateur radio satellite. The Russian Space Agency, which is providing the ride into space, has currently set the launch window for June 23-24, 1998.

TechSat-1B is a digital store-and-forward satellite using 9600 baud, frequency shift keying (FSK), much like UO-22, KO-23, or KO-25. TechSat-1B will feature VHF/L-band uplinks, with downlinks in the 70-cm band.

4X1KX tells ANS a telemetry decoding program for the satellite will be available shortly. (AMSAT News Service)

■ **The new owner of the RTTY Journal is Bill Henry, K9GWT, president of Hal Communications.** The publication will be known as "The New RTTY Journal." The publication started as the newsletter of the Southern California Radio Teletype Society in 1953. The publication later became the Digital Journal of the International Digital Radio Association. Financial problems caused IDRA to fold last year. Henry has now purchased the assets of the magazine and will start regular printing this summer. (Address: 616 W. Church St., Champaign, IL 61820; Tel.: 217/367-7373; e-mail: ghenry@halcomm.com)

■ **The May 1998 edition of the GEARVAKf (Greater Enon Amateur Radio Vention and Kitefly ... "the f is silent") Bulletin**, a locally produced newsletter that spoofs ham radio was distributed as usual at the Dayton Hamvention.

It carried articles about the "FCC Imposes an Internet Morse Code Requirement" since the Commission is under pressure to clean up the Internet after restrictions imposed by the Communications Decency Act were ruled unconstitutional. Another story says "FCC to Require License Examination for Cellular Phone Users" since it is becoming too popular.

■ **Apple has a new consumer \$1299 Macintosh with a built-in monitor called the "iMac"** that will ship in August. (233-MHz, 750 PowerPC processor, 4GB hard drive, 32 MB memory, CD-ROM drive and 512K of cache memory.)

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"In the Amateur Service program, we received about 133,000 applications during 1997. That's a lot of applications. Approximately 60% were granted within 2 days of receipt. That's a lot of satisfied people. My Novice, General, and Advanced Class licenses took 6 weeks to the day to arrive in my mail box. My Extra worked when I left the exam session. Guess which system generates fewer questions for us.

"The amateur service's electronic filing program was the pioneer for electronic filing within the Wireless Bureau and showed that electronic filing and processing provided benefits to all parties involved. You should have heard the howling when our electronic system went down in February. People didn't remember or know that license grants took 3-6 months before we went to an electronic system.

"We currently receive approximately 60 to 70% of our amateur service applications electronically. All the VECs file their data electronically. In the vanity call sign program, we receive four electronic applications for every paper application.

"Ham radio uses a lot of databases. What you see on our web page is a database of answers to question. There is the list of VECs, the exam fee, and how to renew your license and how to change your name or address in the database.

"There are the public announcements of the procedures of the different call sign systems. Also included is a database of FAQs about the vanity system. There is also a link to an electronic *Vanity Call Sign Application*.

"There is information on obtaining a copy of the rules from other Internet databases. There is a database of FAQs about your communications. We also provide the *Memorandum Opinion and Order* in PRB-1, the landmark 1985 pre-emption on your antennas.

"Every day I receive several inquiries about databases for looking up call signs. We make our database available in zip files. Several private providers download them and transform them into user friendly systems for you to use for lookup. There are links to them all over the Internet. I think I have bookmarks to at least 12 in my machine. In ham radio, there are databases for newsletters, QSL managers, DXpeditions and just about everything else you can think of.

"A few of you have noticed that your name was misspelled or that the data base contains some other keying error. We fix these at no charge to you because both you and the Commission need an accurate database. After all, getting those QSL cards with the computer stickers on them so you can mail them some place so a person can key the information from the computer sticker into their computer seems to be important to some in the electronic age. And that system revolves around correct addresses.

"When you find a keystroking error in your license

grant, you should call it to our attention. You can write to our Gettysburg address.

"In the ULS proceeding, the Commission has proposed to consolidate, revise, and streamline rules governing application procedures for every radio services licensed by the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau, including the amateur service. The Commission proposes consolidating the procedural rules relating to applications contained in eleven sets of service-specific rules into a single set of rules in Part 1, updating references to FCC form numbers throughout our rules, and consolidating long-form application requirements for auction participants.

"In the amateur service, today there are databases for individual operator/primary station licenses, club station licenses, milrec station licenses, RACES stations, and alien operators. There are four application forms to get information into these databases. And there is the WIPs database ...you don't want to go there. [The *Work In Progress* database is where applications with errors on them reside. These must be manually handled.] We don't and won't even know about operators here under the provisions of the CEPT or CITEL agreements the ARRL got through the State Department.

"ULS is envisioned to support full electronic filing of all licensing-related applications and associated filings. It also will provide the public with better on-line access to public licensing information than is available today. ULS will be designed to keep licensee information secure from outside tampering.

"One of the questions that has been generated by the present optional electronic systems deals with social security numbers. Individuals have asked why they must submit their SSN, which is an individual's Taxpayer Identification Number, to use this system.

"The answer is that the Commission must comply with the statutory requirements of the *Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996*. This law was enacted as part of an effort to increase collections of delinquent government debts. Since April 26, 1996, federal agencies, including the Commission, have been required to collect TINs of all persons doing business with that agency. Under the statute, persons doing business with an agency are defined as applicants for, or recipients of, a federal license. The *Financial Management Service* of the U.S. Treasury has recommended that agencies obtain the TIN when an agency first has direct contact with a person.

"In addition to the meeting the requirements of DCIA, the ULS NPRM proposes to use TINs as unique identifiers for each individual or entity filing an application for an FCC authorization in any of the wireless services, including the amateur radio service.

"Manual filers would also be required to submit their TINs, and manually-filed applications will be entered into the ULS system by Commission staff. TIN information is not available to either the public or the FCC staff through

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the ULS. The only FCC staff who have access to TINs are those few individuals who ensure the Commission's compliance with the DCIA requirements.

"In the Notice, the Commission proposed a variety of rule changes that will allow wireless applicants and licensees to take full advantage of the technological benefits of ULS, and changes that will make the Commission's wireless licensing procedures faster, less burdensome, and more consistent.

"Specifically, the Commission proposed to:

- Consolidate service-specific application and licensing rules into a single set of rules for all wireless radio services. This will eliminate nearly two hundred duplicative and inconsistent rules.
- Replace over forty existing wireless application forms with five new forms. FCC Short Form 605 (Quick-Form Application for Authorization in the Ship, Aircraft, Amateur, Restricted, and General Mobile Radio Services, as well as for Commercial Radio Operator Licenses) will be used as a quick-form application for applicants who are not presently required to submit extensive technical data to receive a license.

This includes amateur radio operators. This form would replace the FCC Forms 610 and 610V. You would use the FCC Form 605 for everything you use a Form 610 or 610V document for now, including renewing and modifying your license. As is the case now, applications for a new license or upgrading your operator privileges would go through the VEs and VECs; applications for renewal or modification of your license could go through one of the VECs that provide this service or the Form 605 document could be filed electronically or sent to our Gettysburg address. All of the VECs are filing their applications electronically to us, which is partly why licenses are coming out as quick as they are.

- The Commission also proposed to require applicants and licensees in most wireless radio services to file applications and other documents electronically after 1999 using ULS. Electronic filing will improve speed of processing and eliminate data entry errors, but the Commission sought comment on whether it should continue to allow manual filing in some services.

Other changes proposed for the amateur service in this docket include:

- A proposal to authorize all reciprocal operation by rule. This would eliminate the need for the FCC Form 610A. Reciprocal operation by rule is already the system in place for Canadian amateur radio operators who visit the United States and is the system requested by the ARRL for amateur operators from CEPT and CITEL countries. When you request we authorize operation by rule, you are saying there is no need for a database.

The United States has reciprocal arrangements with sixty-five countries to allow amateur operators to operate their stations temporarily in the other country. Currently we grant some 2,000 reciprocal permits annually to amateur operators from those countries. No standards are required of these applicants other than possession of the license document issued by their country of citizenship

and there is no fee. The FCC-issued permit, therefore, simply confirms that the holder of the permit also holds a license from his or her home country.

"As is now the case, no U.S. citizen -- regardless of any other citizenship held -- would be eligible under this authorization procedure. United States citizens would continue to have to acquire an FCC-issued amateur operator license by passing the requisite examinations.

"From what I have heard, this proposal already has been accepted by segments of the amateur community. Actually, it already seems to be in effect. One morning in February, there was a discussion on one of the PVRC repeaters about the CEPT announcement by the ARRL. One fellow said he was surprised the League wanted such an arrangement because, for several years, hams from Europe have been coming here and operating portable without filing a Form 610-A or getting a reciprocal license!

- The Commission also is proposing to use the voluntary, uncompensated and unreimbursed services of certain amateur radio organizations to process applications for new, renewed and modified amateur service club, military recreation and radio amateur civil emergency service ("RACES") station grants. This system already is authorized under Section §4(g)(3)(B) of the *Communications Act*. We currently process about 1500 of these a year.

"Under the proposal, to obtain a new club or military recreation station license grant, you would present a properly completed FCC Form 605 document to an amateur radio organization shown on a list we will publish. To qualify as a '*Club Station Call Sign Administrator*' the organizations would have to be tax-exempt under Section §501(c)(3) of the *Internal Revenue Code of 1986* and agree to provide voluntary, uncompensated and unreimbursed services in providing club and military recreation station call signs. The Administrator would submit the information on the FCC Form 605 document to the FCC in an electronic batch file. This would eliminate the need for the FCC Form 610B.

"The Commission also proposes to accept the services of any organization meeting the minimum requirements of Section §4(g)(3)(B) of the *Communications Act* after it completes a pilot electronic autogrant batch filing project similar to that completed by the volunteer-examiner coordinators. We anticipate that many VECs would be likely to volunteer their service as club station call sign administrators. The *Club Station Call Sign Administrator* would retain the FCC Form 605 document for at least 15 months and make it available to the FCC upon request. This is basically the same system as the VECs use now.

"Please keep in mind that club, military recreation and RACES station license grants simply authorize the use of a unique call sign in the station identification procedure. They do not authorize any operating privileges, contrary to what I hear. Especially about Field Day. You can do anything under your own station license grant that you

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can do under one of these other types of grants. Your comments are welcome. Remember they will be due next Friday, May 22; reply comments are due June 8.

## The Biennial Review

"Some of you may have seen the announcement that the Commission was undertaking 31 proceedings as part of the 1998 biennial regulatory review of all of the radio services that it administers. This review of our regulations is required by Section 11 of the *Communications Act*. Section 11 requires that we determine whether any rule is no longer in the public interest and whether such regulations should be deleted or modified. This announcement came out Thursday, February 5, and is on the FCC homepage.

"The review is aimed at simplifying, eliminating or modifying regulations that are overly burdensome or no longer serve the public interest. The list of proceedings was compiled following an internal review of all existing regulations and informal input from the industry and the public. The Commission has determined that the first biennial regulatory review presents an excellent opportunity for a serious top-to-bottom examination of all the Commission's regulations, not just those statutorily required to be reviewed.

"The proceeding will include a review of the amateur service rules. This review is intended to examine ways to further streamline the administration of the amateur service and to simplify the licensing process. We anticipate that it will look at global issues such as what is the goal the license structure should achieve, is there a way to reach this goal, and whether any changes are needed to the license structure?

"We have received formal and informal petitions that bring up questions of the amateur service license structure and the licensing process. There seems to be a consensus that our structure has too many classes of licenses, relies too heavily on code proficiency, and may be unnecessarily complicated. One petitioner wants to expand greatly privileges for Technician Class licensees and increase the amount of spectrum for voice communications.

"The ARRL has filed RM-9196. This addresses the licensing process. It requests that we take additional steps to prevent a person without a bona fide disability from using a physician's certification of disability. The ARRL says that about 8% of the applications contain this certification and that while some are legitimate, it believes others are not. Under the League's proposal, information concerning the nature of the disability would have to be given to the VEC.

"In 1997, the ARRL asked its members to comment on a proposal to change the Morse code Examination for General to 10 wpm solid copy, in place of the 13 wpm presently required and a proposal to delicense Novices

who couldn't upgrade to Technician Class by passing an open book test. Frequency privileges for other classes would also to be changed. The ARRL proposal was published in QST in March, 1997. You might read it.

"Now I know that some of these suggestions cause you great concern or appear to threaten long standing tenets of ham radio. But this is the kind of thinking that is going on and the kind of proposals that we are receiving. From organizations that represent some of you and by individuals who share your frequencies. You might want to make your views known. To them. One of the ARRL officers told me they received over 8,000 comments on the March proposal. They ended up deciding not to decide but study this one some more.

"The Commission is reviewing its rules and streamlining or eliminating or modifying regulations that are overly burdensome or no longer serve the public interest. This has been going on in other services.

"One question that a number of individuals and organizations have been wrestling with is whether the number of license classes still serves the public interest. You have six classes. Most other countries have fewer. CEPT has two. We want to see how you all feel about this and have your input on this and other issues.

"We have a mailbox to receive your comments. The address is hamcomm@fcc.gov. Well thought out comments will be appreciated. Label them with something like *Amateur Service Review* to make my life easier. And please run them through your PC's spell checker.

"If anything is proposed, I assure you we won't be taking away any privileges from anybody. We learned that lesson in the 1968 incentive licensing decision. We still hear about that occasionally even today. And if any of this questioning results in proposed rule changes, you will have an opportunity to tell us what you think.

## Rule making in the works

"Now before we move to your remarks, I must remind you that there are rule makings where I cannot take your comments at this time. This Forum is not on the public record. Please wait until I'm out of earshot, and then have at it.

"These are some of the active rule making proceedings where the amateur service is involved. There is the CEPT-CITEL item. This is WT Docket No. 96-188. The comment periods have closed. There is the ULS item. WT Docket No. 98-20. The comment period is still open.

"I can listen to your remarks about the biennial item because it does not exist yet. There is the Spread Spectrum item. Your comments and reply comments are on record and the staff is working on a *Report and Order*. I'll try to remember to talk about this next year. Assuming we don't have other items on the scale of the ULS or biennial review items...